

Welcome to Grant County – Oregon's Eclipse Central

Grant County is cattle country, gold country, steelhead country, and a frontier paradise – but the stars tell us that's not all. Two years from now, for a span of about 2 minutes, Grant County also will be Eclipse Central, at least in Oregon.

A total solar eclipse is coming to North America in August 2017, and the path of totality couldn't be more convenient for viewers who live in or travel to Grant County.

The trajectory of totality, where the viewing is best and longest, arcs across a swath of Oregon. But sorry, Portland, Pendleton, Eugene and Bend – it's going to miss y'all by miles. It won't miss us here in Grant County, however, with the path covering all but a sliver of our turf. In fact, no Oregon county has greater land mass in the prime viewing path than Grant.

Even better, the show will be mid-morning in August, when clear skies are more than likely. Combine that with our wide open spaces and big sky, and it starts to look like this will be one of the great places to view the eclipse.

So who cares? Apparently a lot of folks. Total solar eclipses are rock stars, no pun intended, in the celestial showcase. They are rare, and people travel great distances, even across the globe, to

Fun in the sun

Visit www.eclipse2017.org for information about the eclipse and safe-viewing tips.

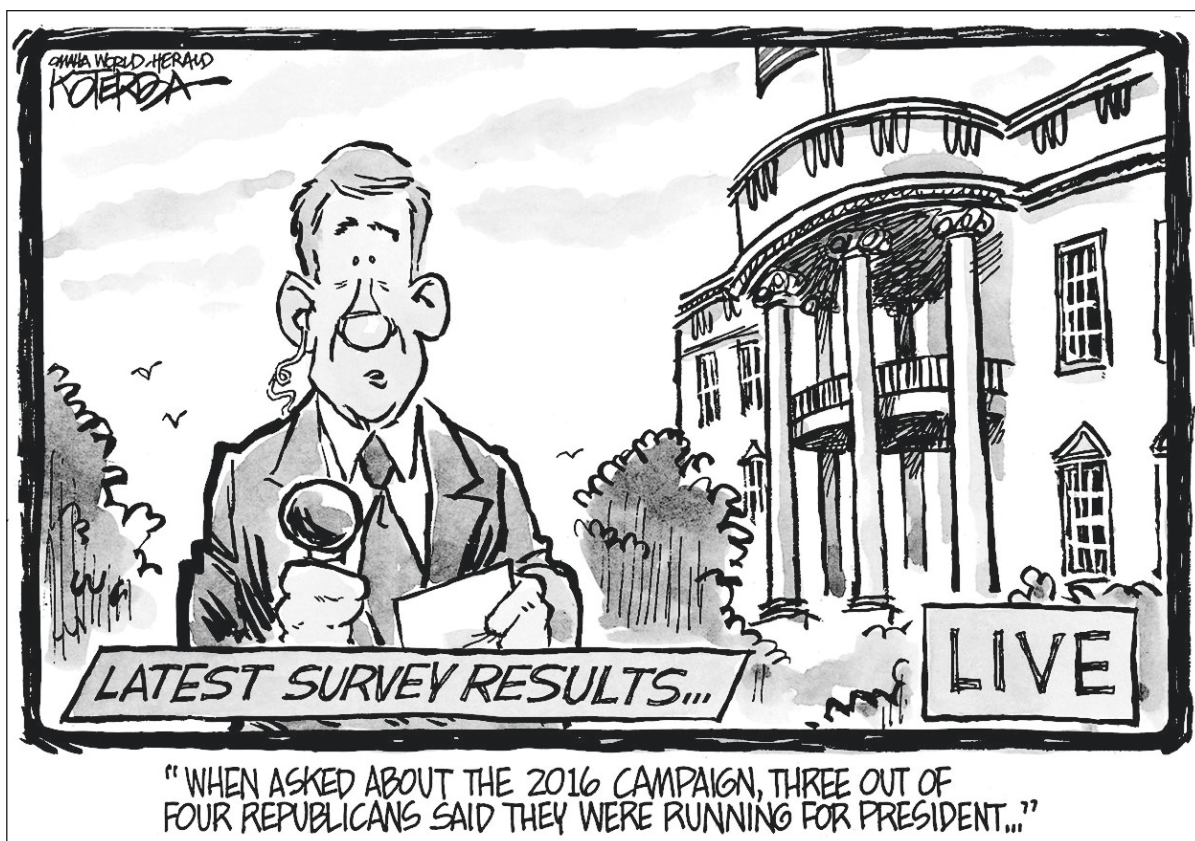
The site even has a countdown – As of this issue, it's 816 days until the shadow arrives on the West Coast.

catch the sight.

Visitors are already booking rooms in the path; here in Grant County, the Chamber of Commerce is urging tourist-dependent businesses to get ready. With a little extra effort now, we could position the county as the Eclipse Capital of Oregon.

That's only a little tongue in cheek – the fun comes with a serious chance to showcase the beauty and natural wonders of this area to visitors. After all, the eclipse travelers with their funny spectacles will spend roughly 2 minutes focused on the sky. But they could be here for days before and after, taking in the scenery, staying in local motels and B&Bs, eating in local restaurants, and buying all things country, western and eclipse-oriented.

Aside from a mini-business boom, a proper celebration could generate a lot of goodwill and appreciation for this great part of Oregon and the lifestyle here. And that's always worth firing up the barbecue and putting out the welcome mat. – SC



FARMER'S FATE

Bonds of friendship form as dog, boy learn new tricks

By Brianna Walker
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

Spike came to live with us when he was 11 weeks old – a bumbling puppy hidden behind a mess of wrinkles, sagging ears, and huge paws.

He looked like a child playing dress up in their parents closet, his skin draped over his face and puddling under his chin. When he looked up at you with those big, sad, drooping red eyes, you couldn't help but want to pet him ... and laugh. It was our first experience with a blood hound.

We brought him home and watched as he tried hopelessly to climb the steps, his enormous paws throwing him off balance. He backed up and tried it again, this time whimpering loudly when he stepped on his own ear causing him to come to an abrupt stop.

My son fell in love with this awkward pup before the evening was over. It took a little longer for my husband and I to feel the same, for a 20-pound puppy comes with little sharp teeth and a large, weak bladder. I had seen full grown dogs leave smaller puddles.

One hour plus three ruined socks plus five puddles equals one frazzled mother with no puppy love – and

a new home in the barn.

My 10-year-old great Pyrenees turned up her pretentious nose at the slobbery, smelly, mischievous creature my son named Spike. As did the cats; they stormed around for weeks expressing their displeasure at the goobery gas bomb.

But my son loved him. Day after day they rolled and tumbled, and dug holes and chased sticks. The ring around the bathtub in the evening often reflected the amount of fun they had.

As the months passed, both boy and pup grew – although the pup outgrew the boy in no time at all. Soon the pup weighed in at over 100 pounds, in part, no doubt from all of the items he would steal and eat: hats, sunglasses, sandals, ball bearings, ropes, garden hoses, motorcycle helmets, and bike tires.

Now, every time he does something especially naughty and my patience seems about frazzled, I watch boy and dog dig for gophers. Both down on all fours, with dirt just a flying (mostly from Spike's shovel-sized paws), often making bigger

holes than the gophers ever would. They come up with such satisfied expressions, I can't help but smile.

It's a wonderful example of how a friendship should always be. Each truly believes the other belongs to himself. Spike gives his boy rides like a mini pony, and his boy in turn rubs him down and gives him treats. The boy used his egg money to buy his pup a bed, and the dog in turn lets the boy sleep on it with him in his doghouse.

Wanting a dog that does tricks, my son spent hours (and several boxes of Cheez-its) and finally can make his dog sit and occasionally lay down. But like everything else in their relationship, it is a two-way street. Spike has now taught my son how to bay like a hound; he says he can speak dog really well now, but he doesn't always understand it. And last night he curled up on the dog bed with one of my favorite blankets and fell fast asleep.

I almost didn't have the heart to disturb him ... after all, he had circled the bed three times before finding the exact spot to sleep in.

Brianna Walker writes about life in the country in the *Farmer's Fate*, published occasionally in the *Blue Mountain Eagle*.

FROM THE BOOKSHELF

Fabled 1845 Meek Cutoff inspires another tome

By Linda Driskill
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Another Meek Cutoff book? Is it the abundance of descendants, general interest in wagon trains, or maybe simply the rumor of gold nuggets that makes this such a popular topic for writers?

"Wood, Water & Grass – The Meek Cutoff of 1845" by James and Theona Hambleton is the latest to come to my attention.

You have to envy this Baker City couple their hobby, spending days combing through wagon train diaries and then matching landmarks to diaries and searching for the wagon tracks. Many searchers have gone before with their theories and photos, and the index lists 81 research sources.

The Hambleton text is accompanied by excellent maps and photos, along with the daily diary quotes for that part of the route.

The book tells of the trail emigrants who traveled in about 480

Review

"Wood, Water & Grass – The Meek Cutoff of 1845"
– By James and Theona Hambleton, 2014

wagons, in "companies" under a designated leader.

The authors claim the travelers' fear of Indians "overrode their common sense," prompting them to take the cutoff – a new trail that turned out to be a formidably challenging route. Indeed, it had never before had wagon use. And they started off on the cutoff already exhausted from covering 1,300 miles in 97 days to reach Fort Boise.

The Hambletons stand completely behind Stephan Meek as a decent and honest man, although he has often been portrayed as a "conniving, devious scoundrel."

Unfortunately he was a man of few words and thus didn't fare well in arguments. The immigrants, for

example, first lost faith in him when they saw the Steens Mountain, but he insisted it was part of the Cascades.

Twenty-four people perished along the route; the Hambletons speculate that was caused by the consumption of alkali (as a salt substitute). The most famous grave is that of Sarah Chambers, now well marked on the North Fork of the Malheur River near Castle Rock.

The authors say their goal is to have the trail mapped, marked and permanently monumented.

And the gold? While stories persist that children found nuggets in a creekbed on the trail, no mention of gold is found in any of the diaries. It may just have been a rumor embellished into a myth. These authors conclude that the real gold was the women of the trail.

Linda Driskill is a native of Grant County and a volunteer at the Grant County Library, where many books about this perilous journey can be found in the Oregon Room.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Guns and dictators

To the Editor:

Regarding Senate Bill 941: Now we know how the new governor stands with Obama on guns.

A majority of our leaders and the governor just made it possible for me and many thousands of other gun owners to become dishonest people with this stupid bill. If I would want to give

my son or brother a gun, I'm going to go through all the BS this bill calls for – I don't think so!

So if I do give away a gun and happened to get caught, I'm now a dishonest criminal. I could be fined and spend time in jail, most likely as a felon.

I'll wager this bill may stop possibly a dozen guns going to the wrong person, for use in a violent crime. But it will be making thou-

sands of gun owners dishonest for sure.

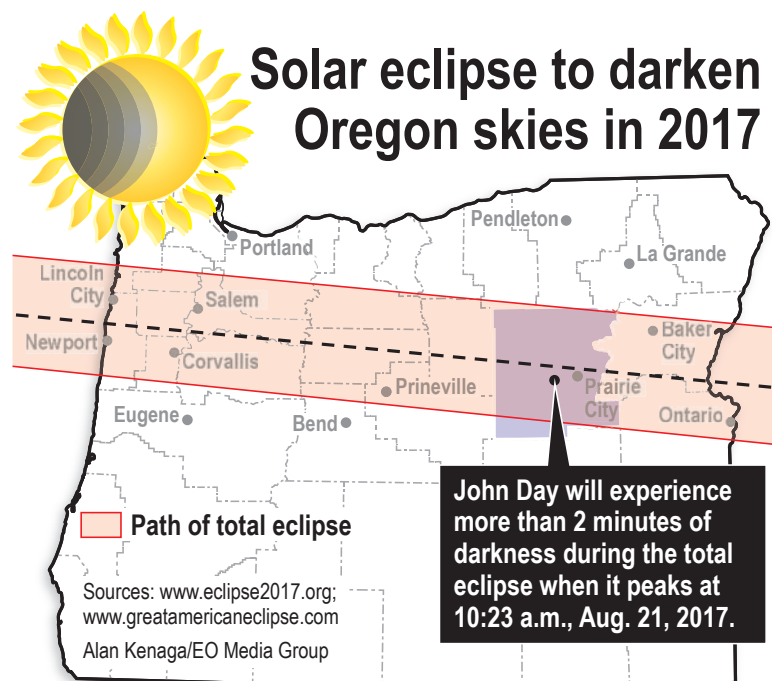
Folks, take a look – there aren't a lot of us left that remember about the Nazis, the communists and all the dictators of the past. I'm thinking there are a lot of people in our governments who don't remember, or who flunked history, that a lot of people died to defeat dictatorship. But we are starting to live with it more and more every day. Sen-

ate Bill 941 is just another phase of it.

Remember the saying, "America, home of the free" – It's getting to where you can kiss that saying goodbye.

I hope you all honored your veterans, especially on Memorial Day. I'm sure if a lot of them knew what was going on today, they would roll over in their graves.

Cliff Franklin
Prairie City



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